

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

April 2013

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, April 18, 2013, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speakers for the program will be Ames Kergosien, Ellis Cuevas, and Joe Kearn presenting a roundtable discussion of "When We Were Young in Bay Saint Louis." **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, April 17, 2013**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

GRANT WRITING COMMITTEE

The Historical Society is starting a Grant Writing Committee to help us accomplish our long term goal of preserving both the history of Hancock County and the current events which will become the basis of future research efforts. Our current financial resources prevent us from acquiring the technical resources and making the capital improvements that enable us to accomplish this goal.

If you have any experience in this regard and would like to contribute to this effort, please consider joining our committee and call the Society at 467-4090.



Influenza Epidemic of 1918

By
Eddie Coleman

The influenza pandemic of 1918 killed an estimated fifty million people worldwide. In fact, one-fifth of the world's population was affected, and this disease killed more people than any other illness in recorded history. Erroneously referred to as "Spanish" flu because Spanish newspapers initially reported its pervasiveness, it was not confined to this one country. The disease was present in other European countries, but because of World War I, authorities didn't want any negative news re-

ported and had placed a ban on such reporting.

The pandemic occurred in two phases. The first widespread outbreak with the usual flu symptoms of chills, fever, and fatigue occurred in the late spring of 1918 in Europe among British, German, and French troops as well as in the Spanish population. It *did* affect a few civilians throughout Europe, but not a significant number.

Although there was an outbreak of the disease at Fort Riley, Kansas, in March of 1918, it was almost completely ignored in the United States until the second wave struck in Boston in August when troops began returning from World War I. What began with sixty reported cases at the Commonwealth Pier in Boston spread to the nearby

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HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
 Jackie Allain, Publisher

Published monthly by the
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LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY
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MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

Navy Radio School at Harvard University in Cambridge, infecting the young men studying radio communications there. People stricken during this second, more severe form of influenza often died within hours or days. The symptoms were bluish skin and lungs filled with fluid which caused suffocation.

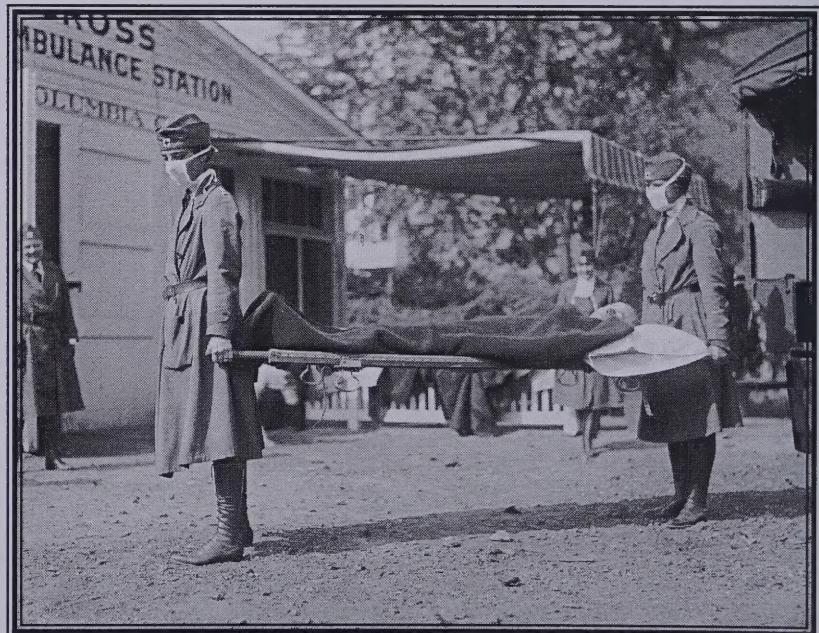
By the fall of 1918, the disease reached throughout the United States and affected almost every urban as well as rural area. Because of the seriousness of the influenza outbreak, cities and towns across the country were forced to take drastic actions to insure the health and well-being of their citizens. Mississippi municipalities were not exempt from these necessary actions. Schools were closed, church services were cancelled, and public meetings and gatherings were postponed.

The pandemic reached its height in the United States in September of 1918. By November the intensity of the disease had abated, and the Bay Saint Louis Board of Health met with Mayor R. W. Webb in attendance and decided to

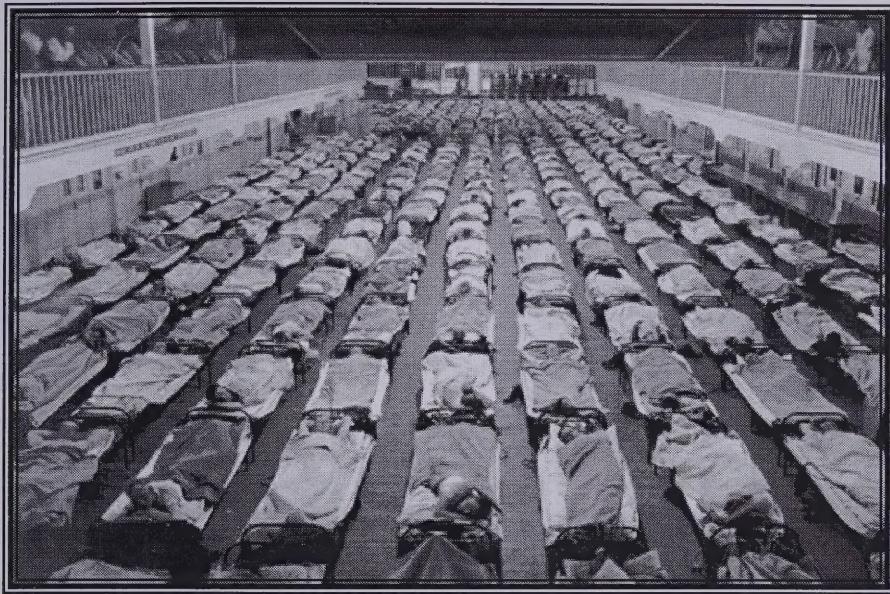
allow the churches to resume services on Sunday, November 3. However, schools and the movie theater were to remain closed until further notice.

St. Stanislaus College and St. Joseph Academy were permitted to reopen the following Tuesday for boarders and on Wednesday for day school students who had had influenza. But students who had not had the disease were told that they would be notified later when they could return. Furthermore, both institutions were ordered to maintain a strict quarantine. Similarly, the Board of Health directed the general public to govern itself accordingly. One can surmise that this requirement meant for citizens to refrain from casual visiting and gathering so that the epidemic could be more easily controlled.

Because of the proliferation of the illness, local physicians also succumbed to the disease, and Mayor Webb sought assistance from physicians in nearby areas. A young doctor, A. F. Rodes of New Orleans, answered the call. After working here for two weeks, a ru-



Red Cross nurses transporting patients



Patients stricken with influenza were often placed in large, makeshift communal wards.

more spread among the populace that he had been stricken with the disease and subsequently had died. However, the mayor denied these stories as totally unfounded, and the *Sea Coast Echo* "[made] note of the untruthfulness of the report with much pleasure and [hoped] the doctor [would] keep well."

A Hancock County Works Progress Administration [WPA] interview with Dr. C. L. Horton in the 1930's sheds further light on the epidemic. Dr. Horton was one of the leading physicians of Bay Saint Louis during the plague and the attending physician of St. Stanislaus at that time. He reported that the college staff and most of the students, about two hundred people, had had the flu and that he didn't lose a case.

Dr. Horton said that the conditions in the Bay and throughout Hancock County were the worst that he had encountered as a physician. At first the local doctors were able to take care of the influenza cases. But as the epidemic spread and numbered in the hundreds of cases, it was almost impossible to

attend to all of the sick. When the epidemic was at its height, the doctors were stricken, and outside doctors were called in to help attend the sick as evidenced by the aforementioned arrival of Dr. Rodes.

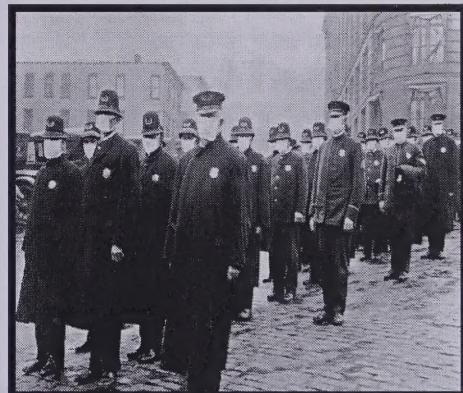
Dr. Horton also commended the Ladies Aid Organization and volunteer citizens for the noble work they did. Without them he said that he dreaded to think what would have happened to the stricken people. Moreover, he believed that the cause of so many cases of the flu in the Bay was that the germs were brought by men returning home from the government work camps and by returning soldiers. Such a conclusion has appeared in many reports on the pandemic outbreak of this disease. Many authorities have theorized that the close quarters of the World War I military helped spread the contagion among soldiers and that they brought it home to their friends and families when they returned after the war.

Dr. Horton concluded his interview with the WPA researcher by remarking that he hoped never

again to see the suffering that he found while making house calls to local residents. In some cases entire families were stricken, some patients were lying on the floors, some had no food or medicine, and some had no one to take care of them.

In Waveland Dr. Adrian Heva, the only physician living in the city, did a great deal of charitable work among the residents who were often too poor to pay for medical aid. Although his practice was in New Orleans, he visited the sick of Waveland after he returned home in the evenings. He often took hot soup and nourishment to them and had prescriptions filled for them in New Orleans at his own expense. Dr. Hava was assisted in his duties by Andrew Roberts of Waveland. For years afterward the two men were remembered fondly by the citizens of Waveland for their efforts.

On a larger scale the results of this pandemic are two fold. An estimated fifty million people worldwide died; 675,000 died of flu and its resulting pneumonia in the United States; and an estimated 6,219 died in Mississippi. It is not known how many victims there were in Hancock County specifically because no figures were kept. However, because of this illness and the resultant deaths, one positive outcome resulted. The county



Policemen attempt to protect themselves from the flu.

health departments we take for granted today were instituted in Mississippi during the 1920's.

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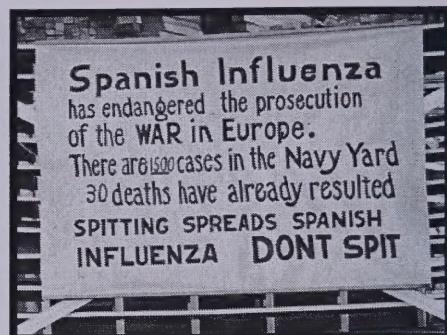
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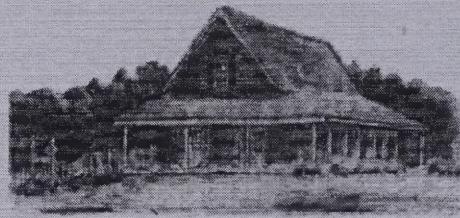
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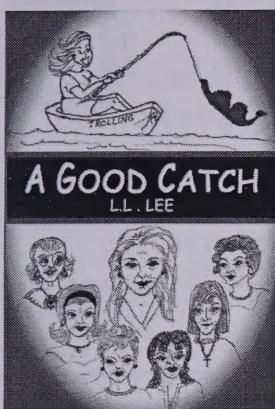
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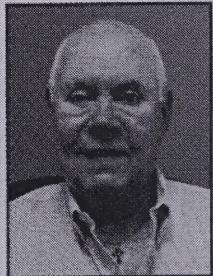


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